

**Jonathan Boucher to George Washington, March 5, 1772, Letters to Washington and Accompanying Papers. Published by the Society of the Colonial Dames of America. Edited by Stanislaus Murray Hamilton.**

**FROM THE REVEREND JONATHAN BOUCHER.**

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY March the 5th 1772.

DR SIR

At length I have seen an Abstract of the Will of The Lord Baltimore: more absurd, & more vexing than You will easily believe. It appears to have been made Fifteen months before his Death, in Venice, & is as follows

To Mrs. Browning (Sister of Mrs. Eden) & Mrs. Eden, each—£10,000 on condition, that They sign a Release to all Claim on the Province.

To Robt. Eden, Robt. Morris (a busy Lawyer, & lately Secretary to the Society of the Bill of Rights) Hugh Hammersly (lately L. B—'s Steward or Agent in England) Richd. Prevost<sup>1</sup> (his Attorney, & of a good Character) Esqrs. his Exrs., on Condition They prove the Will within twelve months, Each—£1500

To Robt. Eden one hundred pounds per annum.

To Henry Harford (a natl. Son, abt. 13 years of age) the Province Remr. to Frances Harford<sup>2</sup>—Remr. to Mrs. Eden.

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To Henry Harford—£30,000

Remr. to Frances Harford—Remr. to Mrs. Eden

To Frances Harford £30,000. Remr. to Henry Harford—Remr. to Mrs. Eden.

To Mrs. Hales (a Woman whom He has been dragging round Europe, &, for a Lady of Easy Virtue, of good Character) £1000.

To two Miss Hales s (his Daughters by the above Mrs. Hales) each £2000.

Hen: & Frances Harford residuary Legatees.

I think I remember nothing more; &, if I mistake not, You will think This quite enough. Two Wills that He had left in England, in both of which I believe He had left the Province, & the Bulk of his Fortune, amounting, it is said, to more than £100,000, [to Mrs. Eden???] were remanded & destroy'd: tho' there has not been known any Coolness between Them, but, on the contrary, an increasing affection, at least, in professions. I am but little able to inform You what Steps the Governor intends to take, tho I happened to be with Him, when He received the Will: only that He is resolved to try to overset it, & with good Hopes of Success. They suppose the Province to be of that kind of Property which is not deviseable, contrary to the opinions espoused some time ago, when there was no doubt but the Will was in Favor of Mrs. Eden, or her Family; I find Precedents in the Case of the Duke of Athol with respect to the Isle of Man.<sup>3</sup> In Case of Success, then, You see, the two Sisters will be Coheiresses, &, of Consequence, Mrs. Eden come in but for half: which however, will be no contemptible Acquisition. You will readily believe how heartily I join with You in wishing Success to this only Reputable Branch of a Family once so respectable: but, in Truth, their prospects seem sadly overcast; &, at least, they have a World of Difficulties to Encounter.<sup>4</sup>

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If any Thing that a wicked & a foolish Man does, could justly be Matter of Wonder, this Will wou'd really be unaccountable. Till now, this Boy was scandalously neglected: his Mother<sup>5</sup> long ago displac'd on a very scanty Pension. Whilst Mrs. Hales was thought to possess a plenary influence over Him, was constantly with Him, as well as her Children.

I shall hardly need to say what Confusion this Event is likely to produce amongst us. The general Opinion seems to be, that the Crown, if not urged by an Attention to the Safety of the Subject, yet as constitutional Guardian to the illegitimate Boy, will immediately appoint to the Government. The Northern Papers, I hear, have already mention'd Mr. Zachary Hood, the Man that came in here as Stamp-Master, for the Govr.. I think it is far more probable that your Friend Coll. Mercer will be the Man; unless Governor Eden & his Friends should apply, which hitherto He seems by no means determined upon. It certainly is, by no means, a very romantic Conjecture, to imagine that We shall now ere long become a royal Government: a Revolution but little wish'd For by the people here.

I hardly ever have seen a Man bear the Shock of ill news with such Composure as the Governor: undoubtedly, nothing was remoter from his Expectations, than so absurd & reproachful a Distribution of so immense an Estate, which He had been repeatedly assur'd wou'd belong to his Family. Mrs. Eden indeed is more affected. She well may, having been tormented by him thro' the whole Course of her Life, &, at last, most villainously dup'd & cheated. Cajol'd by his specious assurances, the Govr. was tempted to give up his Prospects in the Army, which were Flattering, & Mrs. Eden, decoy'd hither [mutilated] against her Inclination. It is happy for them, that They have [mutilated] comfortable Competence to retire to, Fortunately out of his Re [mutilated]

The Govr. begg'd Me most cordially to thank You for your Friend [mutilated] & to assure You of his great Esteem & Regard for You. I expect [mutilated] next Week, & had You been at Home, We shou'd certainly have [mutilated] other tempted You to join Us. He has

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got You a very handsome & [mutilated] Whale Boat, for £20, which, I fancy is by this Time at Mount [mutilated]<sup>6</sup>

I beg the Favour of You to speak to your two Printers, & [mutilated] my News-Papers, if by this Time, I owe Them for a Year. I shall [mutilated] also, You will be so good as remind Them to direct for Me To the Care of [mutilated] Merchts. in Bladensburg, as I have hardly seen one Virga. Paper since Xmas [mutilated] Purdie & Dixon will oblige Me by sending Me, the Address of the Clergy [mutilated] ward, & Dr. Chandler's Appeal &c & Gwatkin's Ansr.<sup>7</sup> which I have seen advertised by Them.

I hope to see You in Maryland soon after your Return, &, in the mean Time, am, Dr. Sir,

yr. affe. Frd. & most obedt. hble Servt. JONAN. BOUCHER

1 Scharf, quoting Mr. Charles Browning, gives this name as Peter Prevost.

2 Sister of Henry.

3 Charlotte, surviving her brother and sister, succeeded, at the death of her father, to the barony of Strange, and the sovereignty of the Isle of Man. Her ladyship m. her cousin John Murray, Esq., who succeeded as 3rd Duke of Athole.—BURKE'S Peerage.

4 Henry Harford was acknowledged proprietary of the province, of which Robert Eden (as he was one of the executors of the will, and guardian of the boy) remained the Governor. The Hon. Mrs. Browning, however (who, by her father, Charles, Lord Baltimore, had been left the reversion in case of the death of her brother Frederick without issue), through her husband, John Browning, entered suit in the Court of Chancery. Charles Browning, in his appeal to the citizens of Maryland in 1841, says that this case "was in part argued before the Lord Chancellor, but between that time and the time appointed by his Lordship for a second hearing, news had arrived in England that the United States of America had declared themselves independent of Great Britain, which the Lord Chancellor stated to the Council on the day appointed for the further hearing of the cause, and objected to hear it, alleging, it was only a waste of time, as let it belong to which it would, he had no power to give the rightful owner possession."

5 Hester Wheland.

6 By Cash pd. Colo. Fitzhugh, by Govr. Eden for a Whale-Boat £69.65 Maryd Cy eql to . . 65. 66 (Washington's Ledger.)

7 The Rev. Thomas Bradbury Chandler, D. D., of Elizabeth Town, N. J., published in 1767 an Appeal in Behalf of the Church of England in America, which urged the appointment of bishops for that country. This Appeal led to a great controversy throughout the colonies. Virginia took up the question warmly; Rev. Thomas Gwatkin (professor of mathematics and natural philosophy at William and Mary) being one of four Virginia clergymen to oppose the measure.